

In 2003, a coalition containing countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia, led by the United States, invaded the Arab nation of Iraq with the stated intent to depose its brutal dictator, Saddam Hussein, and install democratic institutions ^[1]. Iraq's crude oil reserves, being considered the 5th largest in the world^[2], attracted a lot of importance in the run up to, and after the invasion and occupation of the country.

There is plenty of reason to believe that re-distribution of oil wealth played a role in the justification of the invasion, by helping to pay back the financial burden of the conflict. For example, In one of the very first National Security Council meetings attended by President Bush, he was given briefing materials regarding a plan for a post-Saddam Iraq, materials that contained a Pentagon paper titled "Foreign Suitors for Iraqi Oilfield contract", documenting areas ripe for potential oil extraction, and possible interested contractors from dozens of countries globally^[3].

Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, foreign minister of Poland, a coalition member, stated they "have never hidden our desire for Polish oil companies to finally have access to sources of commodities.", and that access to Iraqi oil was their "ultimate objective" ^[4]. Another coalition member, the United Kingdom, had its then-trade minister tell British Petroleum executives that the British government was working to secure a good share of Iraq's oil and gas reserves through its role in Iraqi regime change^[5].

Former Republican Senator, Secretary of Defense, and chairman of the Atlantic Council, Chuck Hagel reacted to people denying oil's importance by saying "People say we're not fighting for oil. Of course we are"^[6]. Ultimately however, as oil acquisition was never an explicitly stated goal of the United

States, there is “still no consensus on the degree to which oil played a role in that war”, as stated by scholar Jeff Colgan.^[7]

What is not under debate, on the other hand, is the importance oil played in the occupation itself. In 2004, the Bush administration had hired a consulting firm to write a law that would work to privatized Iraqi oil assets that had been nationalized for decades, opening reserves up to international oil companies ^[8], this law was then successfully brought before parliament in 2007.

After the breakout of the Iraqi Civil War, radical Salafist group Daesh (otherwise known as the Islamic State), took over large swaths of territory throughout Iraq and Syria – including significant oil extraction plants. Daesh then used these to both fuel their own conquest, while additionally selling this oil on the black market throughout the region.^[9]

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